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Sums of Roots of Unity in Cyclotomic Fields

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Let ζ_n denote a primitive n th root of unity, $n \geq 4$. For any integer k , $2 \leq k \leq n-2$ it is shown that the diophantine equation $1 + \zeta_n + \cdots + \zeta_n^{k-1} = \rho\alpha^q$ has no solutions with ρ, α in $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_n)$, ρ a root of unity, α an algebraic integer, and q an integer ≥ 2 , except when $n = 10, 12$, or 30 , where the solutions are completely determined.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let ζ_n denote a primitive n th root of unity. In this paper we present a proof of a generalization of a theorem of Ennola.

THEOREM. *Let $n \geq 4$, $2 \leq k \leq n-2$, and $q \geq 2$. Then the equation*

$$1 + \zeta_n + \cdots + \zeta_n^{k-1} = \rho\alpha^q, \quad (1)$$

where ρ, α are in $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_n)$, ρ a root of unity and α an algebraic integer, has no solutions except

$$n = 10, \quad k = 3, \quad \rho = -\zeta_{10}^{-2v}, \quad \alpha = \zeta_{10}^{v+2}(1 + \zeta_{10}^2), \quad q = 2;$$

$$n = 10, \quad k = 7, \quad \rho = -\zeta_{10}^{-2v}, \quad \alpha = \zeta_{10}^{v-2}(1 + \zeta_{10}^2), \quad q = 2;$$

$$n = 12, \quad k = 5, \quad \rho = \zeta_{12}^{-2v+1}, \quad \alpha = \zeta_{12}^v(1 + \zeta_{12}), \quad q = 2;$$

$$n = 12, \quad k = 7, \quad \rho = \zeta_{12}^{-2v}, \quad \alpha = \zeta_{12}^{v+2}(1 + \zeta_{12}), \quad q = 2;$$

$$n = 30, \quad k = 11, \quad \rho = -\zeta_{30}^{-2v}, \quad \alpha = \zeta_{30}^{v+9}(1 + \zeta_{30} + \zeta_{30}^2), \quad q = 2;$$

$$n = 30, \quad k = 19, \quad \rho = -\zeta_{30}^{-2v}, \quad \alpha = \zeta_{30}^{v+11}(1 + \zeta_{30} + \zeta_{30}^2), \quad q = 2;$$

where v is any integer.

Using more complicated methods than ours, Ennola [1, 2] has analyzed (1) completely when $\rho = 1$, and special cases had been previously investigated

by Mordell [3] and Newman [4, 5]. Some of our techniques are derived from the latter's work.

It will be convenient throughout the paper to denote ζ_n simply by ζ when n is understood. Also we let

$$\eta_k = 1 + \zeta + \cdots + \zeta^{k-1} = (1 - \zeta^k)/(1 - \zeta).$$

As an immediate consequence of the above result and Dirichlet's unit theorem we note the following corollary.

COROLLARY. *If $n \geq 4$ and η_k , $2 \leq k \leq n-2$, is a unit, (in particular if $(k, n) = 1$) then it is part of a system of fundamental units of $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$ with the exceptions $n = 10, 12$, and 30 where for $n = 10$, $(-\eta_3)^{1/2}$, $(-\eta_7)^{1/2}$; for $n = 12$, $(\zeta_{12}\eta_5)^{1/2}$, $\eta_7^{1/2}$; and for $n = 30$, $(-\eta_{11})^{1/2}$, $(-\eta_{19})^{1/2}$ have this property.*

The proof of the Theorem proceeds by assuming for given ζ_n , k , and q the existence of solutions ρ and α to (1) and deducing a contradiction except in the stated cases. Note then that since $|\eta_k| \neq 0, 1$ we may assume in what follows that α is neither zero nor a root of unity.

Before commencing the proof we recall that $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$ is an abelian extension of \mathbb{Q} with Galois group given by the substitutions $\zeta \rightarrow \zeta^v$, $(v, n) = 1$. If α is a unit in $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$ then $\bar{\alpha} = \rho\alpha$, where ρ is a root of unity of $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$ and $\bar{\alpha}$ denotes the complex conjugate of α . Finally, letting N denote the norm map from $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_n)$ to \mathbb{Q} we will make repeated use of the following formulas. For $n \geq 3$

$$N(1 - \zeta_n) = \begin{cases} p & \text{if } n = p^v, \\ 1 & \text{if } n \neq p^v, \end{cases} \quad p \text{ a prime,} \quad (2)$$

and

$$N(1 + \zeta_n) = \begin{cases} p & \text{if } n = 2p^v, \\ 1 & \text{if } n \neq 2p^v, \end{cases} \quad p \text{ a prime.} \quad (3)$$

2. PROOFS

The main tool in the analysis of (1) is given in the first lemma.

LEMMA 1. *Let K be a normal extension of \mathbb{Q} such that for all $\alpha \in K$ and all automorphisms σ of K into \mathbb{C} $\sigma(\bar{\alpha}) = \overline{\sigma(\alpha)}$, where $\bar{\alpha}$ denotes the complex conjugate of α . If α is a nonzero algebraic integer of K , not a root of unity, and ρ, ξ are any roots of unity of K , then for $m > 2$, $\beta = \rho\alpha^m + \xi$ is never a unit. For $m = 2$, β is a unit only if $\rho\alpha^2 = \epsilon\xi$, where ϵ is totally real.*

Proof. Observe that if z is any complex number and $|\rho| = |\xi| = 1$, then for $m \geq 2$

$$|\rho z^m + \xi| \geq \max(|z|, 1)^{m-2} ||z|^2 - 1|.$$

Applying this inequality to the conjugates β_v of β , we find for the absolute norm of β

$$\begin{aligned} |N(\beta)| &\geq \prod \max(|\alpha_v|, 1)^{m-2} \prod ||\alpha_v|^2 - 1| \\ &= \prod \max(|\alpha_v|, 1)^{m-2} |N(|\alpha|^2 - 1)|, \end{aligned}$$

using the condition $\sigma(\bar{\alpha}) = \overline{\sigma(\alpha)}$. Since α is not a root of unity, $|\alpha|^2 - 1$ is a nonzero algebraic integer of K and $\prod \max(|\alpha_v|, 1) > 1$. If $m > 2$ this shows that β is never a unit and if $m = 2$, β is a unit only if for all conjugates

$$|\rho_v \alpha_v^2 + \xi_v| = ||\alpha_v|^2 - 1|,$$

and therefore $\rho_v \alpha_v^2 = \epsilon_v \xi_v$, where ϵ_v is totally real.

The proof of the theorem is split into several cases, depending on the power of two dividing n .

Case 1. If $\zeta = \zeta_n$, where $n > 3$ is odd and if $2 \leq k \leq n - 2$ then (1) has no solutions.

Proof. Since n is odd the map $\sigma: \zeta \rightarrow \zeta^2$ is an automorphism of $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$. Assuming for some k that (1) has a solution ρ_1, α_1 we apply σ and divide the result by (1) to obtain

$$(1 + \zeta^k)/(1 + \zeta) = \rho_2 \alpha_2^q.$$

Applying σ again yields

$$(1 + \zeta^{2k})/(1 + \zeta^2) = \rho_3 \alpha_3^q.$$

Then

$$\rho_3 \alpha_3^q + \zeta^{k-1} = (1 + \zeta^{k-1})(1 + \zeta^{k+1})/(1 + \zeta^2)$$

is a unit by virtue of (3) and the condition $k \not\equiv \pm 1 \pmod{n}$. By Lemma 1 this is impossible for $q \geq 3$.

If $q = 2$ and (1) has a solution we may assume since n is odd that $\eta_k = \pm \alpha^2$. Since $\sigma(\alpha) \equiv \alpha^2 \pmod{2}$ we have

$$\frac{1 - \zeta^{2k}}{1 - \zeta^2} = \pm \sigma(\alpha)^2 \equiv \pm \left(\frac{1 - \zeta^k}{1 - \zeta} \right)^2 \pmod{4}$$

and this implies that $1 - \zeta^{k+1} \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ which contradicts (2).

Case 2. If $\zeta = \zeta_n$, where $n = 2m$, $m \geq 3$ odd, and if $2 \leq k \leq n - 2$, then (1) has no solutions except for $n = 10$ or 30 .

Proof. We have $\zeta = -\lambda$, where λ is a primitive m th root of unity. If k is even and (1) has a solution then

$$\eta_k = (1 - \lambda^k)/(1 + \lambda) = \rho\alpha^q.$$

From (3) either $\rho\alpha^q + \lambda^{k-1}$ or $\rho\alpha^q + \lambda^k$ is a unit. This is not possible for $q \geq 3$ and if $q = 2$ Lemma 1 implies that $\eta_k = \epsilon\lambda^{k-1}$ or $\eta_k = \epsilon\lambda^k$, where ϵ is real. Comparing complex conjugates yields a contradiction.

If k is odd the $\eta_k = (1 + \lambda^k)/(1 + \lambda)$. If (1) has a solution, applying the automorphism $\sigma: \lambda \rightarrow \lambda^2$ as in Case 1 leads to a contradiction if $q \geq 3$. If $q = 2$ we may write (1) in the form $\eta_k = \pm\alpha^2$.

If $\eta_k = \alpha^2$ then using that $\sigma(\alpha) \equiv \alpha^2 \pmod{2}$ gives

$$(1 + \lambda^{2k})/(1 + \lambda^2) \equiv [(1 + \lambda^k)/(1 + \lambda)]^2 \pmod{4},$$

hence

$$(1 - \lambda^{k-1})(1 - \lambda^{k+1}) \equiv 0 \pmod{2}.$$

By (2) this can only happen if $k \equiv \pm 1 \pmod{m}$ which since $k < 2m$ implies $k = m \pm 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$, a contradiction.

Suppose next that $\eta_k = -\alpha^2$. If $\eta_k - 1$ or $\eta_k - \lambda^k$ is a unit then Lemma 1 implies that for a totally real ϵ , $\eta_k = \epsilon$ or $\eta_k = \epsilon\lambda^k$. Since $\overline{\eta_k} = \lambda^{1-k}\eta_k$ this is impossible. Using (2) it is easy to see that $\eta_k - 1$ and $\eta_k - \lambda^k$ are not units only when λ^{k-1} and λ^{k+1} are roots of unity of odd prime power orders.

If m is divisible by at least two primes then these orders are of the form p^a and q^b for distinct odd primes p and q and $m = p^a q^b$. If $m = p^c$ then the orders of λ^{k-1} and λ^{k+1} are of the form p^a, p^b where $\max(a, b) = c$. Note in this case that from the equations $\eta_k - 1 = -\alpha^2 - 1$ and $\eta_k - \lambda^k = -\alpha^2 - \lambda^k$ it follows that -1 is a quadratic residue mod p and so $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. In both cases, applying the automorphism σ as above gives

$$1 + \lambda + \lambda^2 + \lambda^k + \lambda^{k+2} + \lambda^{2k} + \lambda^{2k+1} + \lambda^{2k+2} \equiv 0 \pmod{2}. \quad (4)$$

If m is not a prime power, letting $\xi = \lambda^{(k-1)/2}$ and $\rho = \lambda^{(k+1)/2}$ this may be written as

$$\rho^2 + (\rho + \rho^3)\xi + (1 + \rho^4)\xi^2 + (\rho + \rho^3)\xi^3 + \rho^2\xi^4 \equiv 0 \pmod{2}. \quad (5)$$

Since the ring of integers in $\mathbb{Q}(\xi, \rho)$ is a free module over the integers of $\mathbb{Q}(\rho)$ with basis $\{1, \xi, \dots, \xi^n\}$, $h = \varphi(p^a) - 1$, (5) implies that when $h \geq 4$ all coefficients are divisible by 2 in $\mathbb{Q}(\rho)$, which is impossible. By interchanging the roles of ξ and ρ we see that the only remaining case is when the pair ξ and ρ are 3rd and 5th roots of unity. Then $m = 15$ and we obtain mod 30

the odd values $k = 11$ and 19 , in which cases the stated solutions for α may be found by direct but somewhat lengthy computation.

If $m = p^e$ is a prime power then for every integral j we have

$$\lambda^j = \sum_{i=0}^h a_{ij} \lambda^i, \quad h = \varphi(p^e) - 1$$

and $a_{0j} \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$ only for $j \equiv 0, -p^{e-1} \pmod{p^e}$. Therefore in order for (4) to hold at least one of $k, k+2, 2k, 2k+1$, or $2k+2$ must satisfy one of the latter congruences. Using the condition $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ noted above to facilitate the examination of these cases one finds that (4) holds only for $m = 5$ and $k \equiv 2$ or $3 \pmod{5}$. From this it is any easy matter to find the solutions given in the statement of the theorem. This completes the analysis of Case 2.

Case 3. If $n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ and $n > 4$ then (1) has no solutions for $k = (n/2) \pm 1$ and q an odd prime.

Proof. It suffices to show that the equation

$$(1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta) = \rho \alpha^q \quad (6)$$

has no solutions. If α satisfies (6) then α is a unit so that $\bar{\alpha} = \zeta^r \alpha$. Comparing complex conjugates in (6) gives $-\rho = \rho^{-1} \zeta^{rq}$. Thus ρ^2 is a q th power and therefore so is ρ . Hence for a possibly new α we may assume that

$$(1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta) = \alpha^q. \quad (7)$$

If $q \mid n$ then writing $\alpha = \sum a_v \zeta^v$ we have

$$\alpha^q = q\gamma + \sum a_v \zeta^{qv} = q\gamma + \beta,$$

where β is in the proper subfield $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta^q)$ of $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$. Thus there is an $s \not\equiv 1 \pmod{n}$, $(s, n) = 1$, such that the automorphism σ defined by $\zeta \rightarrow \zeta^s$ fixes β . Applying σ to (7) gives

$$(1 + \zeta^s)/(1 - \zeta^s) \equiv (1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta) \pmod{q},$$

which is impossible for $s \not\equiv 1$.

If $q \nmid n$ and α satisfies (7) then $\bar{\alpha} = \zeta^r \alpha$, where $\zeta^{rq} = -1$ and hence also $\zeta^r = -1$. From (7) we also have that

$$\alpha^q - 1 = 2\zeta/(1 - \zeta) \quad (8)$$

so that letting $\lambda = 1 - \zeta$, $\alpha^q \equiv 1 \pmod{2\lambda^{-1}}$. Let τ be the automorphism of $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$ defined by $\zeta \rightarrow -\zeta$. Then for any integral β , $\tau(\beta) \equiv \beta \pmod{2}$. Note

also that since α satisfies (7) $(\alpha\tau(\alpha))^q = 1$ which since $q \nmid n$ implies $\alpha\tau(\alpha) = 1$. Hence $\alpha^2 \equiv \alpha\tau(\alpha) \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$ which combined with $\alpha^q \equiv 1 \pmod{2\lambda^{-1}}$ implies $\alpha \equiv 1 \pmod{2\lambda^{-1}}$. From (8) then we obtain

$$\alpha - 1 = 2\gamma\lambda^{-1}, \quad (9)$$

where γ is a unit with $\bar{\gamma} = \zeta^{s-1}\gamma$.

Taking the complex conjugate of (9) and eliminating γ gives

$$-(1 - \zeta^s)\alpha = \zeta^s + 1$$

and therefore

$$-(1 - \zeta^{sq})(1 + \zeta) \equiv (1 - \zeta)(\zeta^{sq} + 1) \pmod{q},$$

which implies using the norm formula (2) that $sq + 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{n}$ so that in particular $(s, n) = 1$. Hence we have

$$\alpha = (\zeta^s + 1)/(\zeta^s - 1).$$

Letting σ denote the automorphism taking $\zeta \rightarrow \zeta^s$ we obtain from (7) that $\sigma(\alpha) = \alpha_2$ satisfies

$$\alpha_2^q = (1 + \zeta^s)/(1 - \zeta^s),$$

and therefore

$$\alpha = -\alpha_2^q.$$

Letting $s = s_1$ and $\alpha = \alpha_1$ an obvious induction then shows that for any $j \geq 1$ there exist an s_j with $(s_j, n) = 1$ and a unit α_j such that

$$\alpha_j = (\zeta^{s_j} + 1)/(\zeta^{s_j} - 1) \quad \text{and} \quad \alpha_{j+1}^q = -\alpha_j.$$

It follows then that for every $j \geq 1$ there exists a β_j with

$$(1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta) = \beta_j^{q^j},$$

which is possible only if $(1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta)$ is a root of unity. Since $n > 4$ this is not the case and the proof is complete.

Case 4. Let $\zeta = \zeta_n$, where $n = 2^v m$, m odd, and $v \geq 1$ if $m \geq 3$ and $v \geq 2$ if $m = 1$. Then (1) has no solutions with q an odd prime and $k \not\equiv 0, \pm 1 \pmod{n}$.

Proof. If k is even then for n a power of two $\eta_k - 1$ is a unit, and if n is divisible by an odd prime either $\eta_k - 1$ or $\eta_k + \zeta^k$ is a unit. In both cases then Lemma 1 gives the result.

For odd k we use induction on v , the initial cases being part of Case 2 or when $n = 4$ being vacuous. If $k \equiv (n/2) \pm 1 \pmod{n}$ then Case 3 applies.

Otherwise we assume (1) has a solution and apply the automorphism $\sigma: \zeta \rightarrow -\zeta$. Multiplying the results gives

$$(1 - \zeta^{2k})/(1 - \zeta^2) = \rho\sigma(\rho)(\alpha\sigma(\alpha))^q.$$

Since $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta^2)$ is the fixed field of σ , and ζ^2 has order $n/2$ the last equation contradicts the inductive hypothesis, thus proving this case.

Case 5. Let $\zeta = \zeta_n$ with $n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$. Then (1) has no solutions for any $q \geq 3$ and for $q = 2$ only those stated in the theorem for $n = 12$.

Proof. By Case 4 it suffices to show that (1) has no solutions for $q = 4$, and to exhibit the solutions for $q = 2$. Assume then that (1) has a solution with $q = 4$ or 2. Applying the automorphism $\sigma: \zeta \rightarrow -\zeta$ and using $\sigma(\alpha) \equiv \alpha \pmod{2}$ gives

$$\frac{1 - (-1)^k \zeta^k}{1 + \zeta} \equiv \pm \left(\frac{1 - \zeta^k}{1 - \zeta} \right) \pmod{2q}. \quad (10)$$

If k is even (10) implies that $1 - \zeta^k \equiv 0 \pmod{q}$. For $q = 4$ this is not possible and if $q = 2$ only for $k = n/2$. In that case $\eta_k = 2(1 - \zeta)^{-1}$ and therefore

$$\rho\alpha^2 - 1 = \eta_k - 1 \equiv (1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta)$$

is a unit. Lemma 1 implies that $\rho\alpha^2$ is real, which is clearly false.

If k is odd (10) implies that $1 - \zeta^{k \pm 1} \equiv 0 \pmod{q}$, which cannot occur unless $q = 2$ and $k = (n/2) \pm 1$. Therefore (1) has no solution if $q \geq 3$ and if $q = 2$ it suffices to consider the solution of

$$(1 + \zeta)/(1 - \zeta) = \alpha^2 \quad (11)$$

and

$$(1 + \zeta^{-1})/(1 - \zeta) = \beta^2. \quad (12)$$

If (11) holds then the norm formulas (2) and (3) imply that α is a unit so that $\bar{\alpha} = \zeta^a \alpha$, where $\zeta^{2a} = -1$. Also from (11)

$$\alpha^2 - 1 = (\alpha - 1)(\alpha + 1) = 2\zeta/(1 - \zeta). \quad (13)$$

If \mathfrak{p} is any prime ideal dividing (2) in $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$ then (13) implies that $\text{ord}_{\mathfrak{p}}(\alpha - 1) = \text{ord}_{\mathfrak{p}}(\alpha + 1)$. If $n = 2^v$ then $\mathfrak{p} = (1 - \zeta)$ is such an ideal so that (13) implies $\text{ord}_{\mathfrak{p}}(2)$ is odd, which is false. For $n = 2^v m$, $m \geq 3$ odd $1 - \zeta$ is a unit so that (13) yields $(\alpha - 1)^2 = (2) = (1 + \zeta^a)^2$. Thus

$$\alpha - 1 = \epsilon(1 + \zeta^a), \quad (14)$$

where ϵ is a unit. Using $\bar{\epsilon} = \zeta^b \epsilon$, (14) yields on taking complex conjugates

$$\alpha = (1 - \zeta^{b-a})/(\zeta^a - \zeta^{b-a}).$$

Using this expression for α in (11) and recalling that $\zeta^{2a} = -1$ gives

$$1 - \zeta^{b-a}(1 + \zeta^{-a}) + \zeta^{b+1}(1 + \zeta^{-a}) + \zeta^{2b+1} = 0 \quad (15)$$

and therefore $(1 + \zeta^{-a})(1 + \zeta^{2b+1})$ which since $n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ implies $\zeta^{2b+1} = \pm \zeta^{-a}$.

If $\zeta^{2b+1} = \zeta^{-a}$ we obtain from (15)

$$1 - \zeta^{b-a} + \zeta^{b+1} = 0 \quad (16)$$

and therefore $|1 + \zeta^{b+1}| = |1 - \zeta^{b-a}| = 1$. Hence ζ^{b+1} and $-\zeta^{b-a}$ are primitive third roots of unity and so is $-\zeta^{a+1}$. Therefore ζ is a 12th root of unity and we have $\zeta^a = \pm \zeta^3$, $\zeta^{b+1} = \zeta^{\pm 4}$, $\zeta^{b-a} = -\zeta^{\pm 4}$. An examination of these cases, using that $\zeta^4 - \zeta^2 + 1 = 0$, yields as the only solutions of (11) $\alpha = -\zeta(1 + \zeta)$.

If $\zeta^{2b+1} = -\zeta^{-a}$, (15) becomes

$$1 + \zeta^b + \zeta^{b+1-a} = 0$$

and again this implies ζ is a primitive 12th root of unity with $\alpha = \zeta(1 + \zeta)$ a solution to (11). Combining these results we obtain the family of solutions $\alpha = \zeta_{12}^{v+1}(1 + \zeta_{12})$ to (1). From the analysis of (11) we obtain by conjugation the solutions of

$$(1 + \zeta^{-1})/(1 - \zeta) = \zeta \alpha^2,$$

and hence the two families of solutions stated for $n = 12$.

If (12) has solutions then β is a unit with $\bar{\beta} = \zeta^a \beta$, where $\zeta^{2(a-1)} = -1$. Letting $\lambda^2 = \zeta^{-1}(12)$ gives

$$(\beta - \lambda)(\beta + \lambda) = \beta^2 - \zeta^{-1} = 2(1 - \zeta)^{-1}.$$

As before if $n = 2^v$ this is impossible. For $n = 2^v m$, $m \geq 3$ odd we obtain $\beta - \lambda = \epsilon(1 + \zeta^{a-1})$ with ϵ a unit in $\mathbb{Q}(\lambda)$ and $\bar{\epsilon} = \lambda^b \epsilon$. Hence since the denominator is not zero

$$\beta = (\lambda^{-1} - \lambda^{b+1}\zeta^{-(a-1)})/(\zeta^a - \lambda^b\zeta^{-(a-1)}). \quad (17)$$

Substituting (17) in (12) gives, after some simplifying,

$$\lambda^b(1 + \zeta)(1 - \zeta^{1-a}((1 - \zeta)/(1 + \zeta))) + \zeta^{-b} + \zeta = 0.$$

Since the factor $(1 - \zeta^{1-a}((1 - \zeta)/(1 + \zeta)))$ cannot vanish for $n > 4$ we obtain that $\lambda^b \in \mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$. But then (17) implies that $\lambda \in \mathbb{Q}(\zeta)$, which is a contradiction. Thus (12) has no solutions and the proof of the theorem is complete.

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